

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday 8 July 2015 in Committee Room 1, City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 1635

Adjourned 1745

PRESENT – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
D Smith	Engel	N Pollard
	Tait	
	Thirkill	

Co-opted Members: Chair of the Children in Care Council
L Donohue – Bradford Achievement Service

Also present: Councillor Ikram – Executive Assistant, Health and Social Care.

Apologies: Councillor Leeming, N O'Neill (Bradford NHS) and J Pickles (West Yorkshire Police)

Councillor Thirkill in the Chair

1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

2. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meetings held on 4 and 25 March and 22 April 2015 be signed as a correct record.

3. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.



4. **CO-OPTION OF MEMBERS TO THE PANEL**

The Panel considered the appointment of non-voting co-opted members for the 2015-16 municipal year.

Resolved –

That it be recommended to the Regulatory and Appeals Committee that the appointment of non-voting co-opted members to the Panel, for the remainder of the 2015/2016 municipal year, be confirmed as set out below:-

- **Mr J Pickles - West Yorkshire Police**
- **Lynn Donohue - Bradford Achievement Service**
- **Ms N O'Neill - Bradford NHS**
- **The Chair of the Children in Care Council**

ACTION: City Solicitor

5. **CORPORATE PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services gave a presentation to the Panel on the role of the Corporate Parent in the Bradford district.

The following points were highlighted:

- The corporate parenting responsibility lay with the whole Council.
- The duty on Councillors was to act as if 'this was your own child'.
- Over 90% of children were placed within the district.
- The authority was judged on various issues and those authorities deemed to be effective demonstrated strong leadership and cross party monitoring, clear challenge and aspirations, a focus on improving outcomes and active engagement with young people. (The Children in Care Council (CICC) were consulted about agenda items for the Panel and representatives attended Panel meetings).
- Each child's needs were identified in order to improve outcomes and were reviewed regularly to determine impact and effectiveness.
- A profile of the Authority's Looked After Children was given. Numbers were not static; there were usually around 900 children looked after at any point. The ratio per 10,000 under 18s in the population was slightly higher than many other local authorities for a number of reasons. A needs analysis of the current cohort could be forwarded to Members.
- The Pledge had recently been refreshed and once the CICC had completed their review it would be re-launched. This was considered to be a very important document as a statement of intent on the part of the Authority.

Members discussed the issue of young people's awareness of why they were in care and the following comments were made:

- This was one of the questions posed by the 'Viewpoint' the online consultation tool.

- Some young people did not understand because they were not permitted to know some of the relevant information until they were 18.
- There could be a discrepancy between what information was considered to be 'age appropriate' by a young person and their carer(s).
- This was a difficult area to address.

In response to questions from Members of the Panel it was explained that:

- Each child completed a 'strengths and difficulties' questionnaire to establish if there were any mental health difficulties and regular monitoring was undertaken. There were both internal and external services available to address any issues identified. The Panel did look at this issue on a regular basis.
- There were two routes by which a child could become 'looked after'. This could be through a voluntary agreement with the parent, for example if they felt no longer able to cope, or via Court proceedings. The majority came via the second route and could be because they had suffered abuse and/or neglect. There were a number of arrangements that could be reached with various levels of contact maintained with family and friends. A lot of work was undertaken through family support services prior to a child being brought into care.

No resolution was passed on this item.

NO ACTION

6. CHILDREN'S HOMES REGULATIONS AND QUALITY STANDARDS GUIDE

The Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services presented a report (**Document "A"**) which highlighted changes to the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015, including the Quality Standards Guide and the Inspection Framework for Ofsted, which had come into force on 1 April 2015. The report set out the process for the independent monitoring of Children's Homes (under Regulation 44) and the role of Elected Members in visits to Residential Homes.

The Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services explained that:

- Members were asked to commit to undertaking visits at least three times a year. They could usually be scheduled to fit with Member's circumstances and a variety of different visits would be offered so that Members could get a broad view across the service. Members would be accompanied and guided through the process by the independent monitoring officer.
- The reports produced as part of each visit were submitted to Ofsted and would be used as part of the base information for inspections. It was necessary to demonstrate that the Councillors' role as corporate parents was being taken seriously.
- Members could provide a fresh eye to issues and their observations could influence change.

Members commented that:

- Through their experience of undertaking such visits it was considered that they were valuable, educational and could be of great benefit.

- It would be helpful for Members to given some background information on the homes being visited and any particular issues or concerns prior to the visit taking place.

Resolved -

That the Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services be asked to:

- (i) **Arrange workshops to inform all Members of the statutory requirement for the independent monitoring of the Authority's residential homes (under Regulation 44 of the Children's Homes Regulations) and their corporate parenting role.**
- (ii) **Facilitate the participation of each Member of the Panel in three announced monitoring visits of residential and respite homes per year.**

ACTION: Assistant Director – Children's Specialist Services

8. WORK PLAN 2015/16

The Panel's work plan for the forthcoming municipal year (**Document "B"**) was submitted for Member's consideration.

Resolved –

That the item on the Leaving Care Service, scheduled for 11 November 2015, include information in relation to preparation for independence and include input from care leavers.

ACTION: Assistant Director – Children's Specialist Services

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.

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THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER